



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
CITY OF CHICAGO

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CONTACT:

Mayor's Press Office

312.744.3334

press@cityofchicago.org

Peoples Gas:

Marci Grossman

312-240-4024(O); 847-257-5649(M)

mgrossman@peoplesgasdelivery.com

Media Hotline

312-240-4567

mediarelations@peoplesgasdelivery.com

**MAYOR EMANUEL, ALDERMAN MUNOZ JOIN PEOPLES GAS AND NORTH SHORE GAS
TO BREAK GROUND ON NEW \$20 MILLION TRAINING CENTER FOR UTILITY WORKERS**

*100,000+ square-foot, state-of-the-art facility in Little Village will train current workers,
prepare high-school students for utility careers, and generate neighborhood economic opportunities*

Mayor Rahm Emanuel joined Peoples Gas and North Shore Gas president and CEO Charles Matthews, Alderman Ricardo Munoz (22nd), other local officials and community leaders today to break ground on the utilities' new training center in the Little Village neighborhood. Peoples Gas and North Shore Gas are investing about \$20 million in the project, which will provide annual training to more than 1,600 utility workers. Through a partnership with Chicago Public Schools (CPS), the center will help Chicago students train for potential jobs with Peoples Gas when they graduate.

"When we break ground on this new training center, we are breaking ground on new futures for Chicagoans and new opportunities for our students," Mayor Emanuel said. "This training center will give our utility workers cutting-edge training while preparing our students for good careers in the utility industry. This state-of-the-art facility will also create new jobs and support new economic opportunities in the Little Village neighborhood."

"Our new training center will allow Peoples Gas and North Shore Gas to maintain our excellent record of safety and reliability by providing advanced training in best practices for our employees," Matthews said. "Just as important, our new vocational partnership with Chicago Public Schools will help us build for the future as we prepare for a large portion of our workforce to retire and a new generation of workers to begin their careers."

The Training Center

The state-of-the-art center at 4228 W. 35th Place will be more than 100,000 square feet. The facility will provide training for current and future employees of Peoples Gas and North Shore Gas, as well as prepare Chicago high school students for careers as utility workers through a vocational training program with Chicago Public Schools. A new operations center to serve Peoples Gas customers in the surrounding area will be relocated to the facility. The construction for the training center will create local jobs and help boost the Little Village community. Construction is projected to last about a year with the new training center expected to open in the second half of 2017.

UJAMAA Construction, Inc., a Chicago minority-owned general contractor was awarded the contract for the training center construction, which will bring several construction jobs and create opportunities in the Little Village neighborhood.

Peoples Gas Training Center

“Peoples Gas has made a major investment in our vibrant Little Village community, one that will create jobs and provide educational and economic opportunities for our local businesses and primarily Mexican residents,” Alderman Ricardo Munoz (22nd Ward) said. “The CPS partnership is especially significant because it will provide our youth additional educational and career opportunities to help them succeed and make their families proud.”

Chicago Public Schools Partnership

The partnership with Chicago Public Schools (CPS) will help dozens of students from Dunbar Vocational, Fenger and Little Village Lawndale High schools annually train for potential jobs with Peoples Gas and North Shore Gas when they graduate. The program will include:
Field trips to the training center and other experiential opportunities.
Summer internships for sophomores and juniors to experience the utility industry.
Afterschool training courses for seniors to prepare for excellent job opportunities in the gas industry.

“We are so excited for the groundbreaking of the new Peoples Gas and North Shore Gas Training Center because it will help us create a pipeline to viable careers for Chicago Public Schools students,” said Alan Mather, Chief Officer, Office of College and Career Success. “We are so grateful to Peoples Gas for partnering with us - we believe this partnership has the potential to not only expose our students to this growing industry, but to significantly impact the trajectory of their lives.”

Vendor/Minority Vendors

“Peoples Gas and North Shore Gas are committed to hiring minority vendors that provide competitive services and innovative solutions to meet our challenges,” added Matthews. “We are pleased that UJAMAA will also subcontract with minority vendors.”

As part of the partnership with UJAMAA, 85 percent of the spending on sub-contracting will go to minority-owned businesses, with about half of the total spend going to Hispanic-owned subcontractors and 10 percent going directly to companies based in Little Village. This will result in indirect jobs which will benefit Little Village. Additionally, the increased traffic to/from the facility during and after construction will provide an ongoing boost to the Little Village economy through increased commercial sales.

“I started UJAMAA Construction more than 15 years ago to be a socially responsible company and play a significant role in ‘rebuilding our community, one block at a time,’ Jimmy Akintonde, president and CEO of UJAMAA Construction, Inc. said. “I am delighted that Peoples Gas selected UJAMAA for this unique project which is having a significant impact on our community and is a personal-dream-come-true. I look forward to building this state of the art facility on time and on budget.”

Training Areas

The 100,000+ square-foot training center will feature indoor and outdoor training areas:

Indoor Training Center – will include five classrooms, five practical training areas, a computer simulation lab and a 75-seat meeting room available to local community groups.

Outdoor Training Areas – will include a mock “Gas City” with a fully functioning natural gas delivery system and 20 structures for training in system maintenance and gas leak investigation. It will be the largest natural gas mock city training site in Illinois, providing the most extensive real-world training for natural gas workers available in the state. Other training features located outside will include: an area to train employees in excavation and directional drilling; an area for collaborative fire-prevention and first responders training with the Chicago Fire Department; and a commercial driver’s license training area.

About Peoples Gas & North Shore Gas

Peoples Gas and North Shore Gas are both subsidiaries of WEC Energy Group (NYSE: WEC) and regulated natural gas delivery companies. Peoples Gas serves approximately 830,000 residential, commercial, and industrial customers in the city of Chicago. North Shore Gas serves approximately 159,000 residential, commercial, and industrial customers in 54 communities within the northern suburbs of Chicago. For more information about natural gas safety, energy efficiency and other energy-related topics, visit www.northshoregasdelivery.com or www.peoplesgasdelivery.com.

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